

**Dispel the Darkness; be the light!**

**Last September our new square mile O’Hair Park Community Association, held its first picnic; over 200 people attended. Early in the afternoon my eyes caught hold of a young adult man who had come walking across the large playfield. He came up to the picnic area and just stood there and stared.**

- **He witnessed children playing in inflatable bouncies,**
- **Some people getting there face painted,**
- **Others were filling their mouths with free hot dogs and hamburgers; the food provided by stores in our area and cooked by men of the neighborhood,**
- **There was a large table of desserts donated by members of block clubs in the square mile.**
- **He saw people dancing on the grass to the music of a DJ.**

**He just stood there and gazed: He said in amazement, “I don’t believe this!”**

**I became aware that this young man may have well come from a home where there was not enough food, or joy or togetherness to hold picnics and get along as a family. He was simply blind to the possibilities of happy community life. But now, at this picnic, for the first time in his life he could see; he could experience life anew.**

That is exactly how it was for the man in today's Gospel. He was born blind. He had NEVER seen the beauty, the possibilities in life. And so Jesus, the one who said that "I have come that you may have life and have it to the full", sought out this man, spoke to him, made mud from his own spittle, smeared it on his eyes. He TOUCHED him. He touched his very soul. Once touched by Jesus, the man could SEE for the first time.

That first great miracle of seeing life anew was just a beginning of the man's journey. Just like the story of the woman at the well which we read last week, the man had questions.

- What did this experience mean?
- Who was this man who touched him?

Unlike the woman at the well, his answers did not come by a simple dialogue with Jesus. No, his answers came in verbal conflict with the religious leaders of the day. The leaders were threatened by Jesus and the Spirit he unleashed in the world.

They questioned the blind man's parents: Your son was not really born blind, was he? His parents are afraid of these religious leaders who could throw them out of the temple. They answer, " Well, we know that this man is our son, and that he was born blind. But as to how he can see now, he is of age; ask him!

**Then the religious leaders turn their questions toward the man born blind and through a series of verbal exchanges he begins to understand who this person who helped him was; the one who for the first time in his life to SEE.**

- First he said, “This man Jesus took mud, placed it on my eyes and now I can see.**
- Then, after further interrogation, he says, this man must be a prophet. And for his answer he gets thrown out of the temple .**
- Then finally once again, Jesus seeks him out and asks him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” He, who is blind, answers, “Who is he that I may believe in him?” Jesus says, “I who am speaking to you am he.” And then the man says, I get it; I see!”**  
**Then the man worships him.**

**(Pause)**

**What do we learn from the story of the man born blind? What do we learn from the young man at the picnic blind to the fullness of life?**

**We learn two important things. First, there a lot of people walking around who are blind. There are many people who do not know the living God. There are a lot of people who have not seen and experienced the fullness of life.**

**Second, we learn that Jesus actively seeks them out, heals them, and offers them life in abundance. He does not wait for them to come to**

him. Rather, he approaches them, touches them, helps them see the beauty of life. Then he continues to approach them and invite them to get to know him and believe in him. He asks us, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

My brothers and sisters, you and I are the privileged ones; we are the ones who have been given sight. We can see! Jesus asks us today,

- “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”
- If you do believe, are you willing to witness that he has given you sight?

You and I know there are so many people who are walking around depressed, unloved, lacking family and community, not knowing the power of God’s love. We are the privileged ones. Are we willing to witness to our experience of what we see?

We do not have to be the pope, or the bishop to share the Good News of life with another person. We simply need to be a person who once was blind and are now willing to witness that we can see.

Last Holy Thursday, one of our members who has experienced the goodness of the Lord, brought a young man to church. He has had a very difficult early life which led to a time in prison. But now he was

**out and trying to see what life was about.**

**As he sat in church and watched the washing of the feet which recalled how Jesus cared for his by washing their feet, he burst out in tears of joy. At least, for that short moment, he had experienced the healing love of Jesus for him. The young man came to know the Lord a little more deeply that day because someone took the time and effort to be involved in his life, took time to touch him, took time to invite him to a deeper relationship with God.**

**Let us take a short moment of silence now, and try to identify someone we can witness to this week, someone who is blind and needs to be touched; or it may be someone who has experienced the Lord and needs to find out more deeply who this person is. Let us ask the Lord in silence for the grace to be his instrument in bringing life and peace to another human being.**